DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 437 055 IR 057 591

AUTHOR	Hopkins, Dianne McAfee; Zweizig, Douglas L.
TITLE	The United States National Library Power School Program: Research Evaluation and Implications for Professional Development and Library Education.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	10p.; In: Unleash the Power! Knowledge - Technology - Diversity: Papers Presented at the Third International Forum on Research in School Librarianship, Annual Conference of the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) (28th, Birmingham, AL, November 10-14, 1999); see IR 057 588.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Education; *Course Integrated Library Instruction; Curriculum Development; Elementary Education; Higher Education; *Instructional Improvement; *Instructional Leadership; Junior High Schools; Learning Resources Centers; *Librarian Teacher Cooperation; Librarians; Library Education; Library Funding; Library Role; Library Services; Library Surveys; Middle Schools; *National Programs; Partnerships in Education; Principals; Professional Development; Program Evaluation; *School Libraries; Teacher Education; Teacher Surveys
IDENTIFIERS	Administrator Surveys; *Library Power

ABSTRACT

The Library Power program is a school improvement initiative of the DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund that began in 1988, designed to promote the full integration of the school library media program into the school curriculum in public elementary and junior high/middle schools. With a total investment exceeding $45 million, Library Power is the largest nongovernmental funding for school library media programs in over 30 years. It operated in approximately 700 schools and served more than one million students. Library Power sought to create a national vision of public elementary and middle school library media programs through the instructional leadership of the library media specialist and through partnerships within the district and with the community. This study summarizes selected findings of a national evaluation of Library Power and discusses implications for preservice and continuing education of teachers, principals, and library media specialists, as well as the likelihood of institutionalization of Library Power practices. The evaluation found that the Library Power initiative advanced the notion of a student-centered library media program in a learning community. It showed that, given the right conditions, school library media programs can promote positive opportunities for excellence in teaching and learning. (Author/MES)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

The United States National Library Power School Program Research Evaluation and Implications for Professional Development and Library Education

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K. Haycock

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 437 055

Dianne McAfee Hopkins, Ph.D.
<Dhopkins@facstaff.wisc.edu>

Professor, School of Library and Information Studies
University of Wisconsin – Madison
United States of America

Douglas L. Zweizig

Professor, School of Library and Information Studies
University of Wisconsin – Madison
United States of America

The Library Power Program is a school improvement initiative of the DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund that began in 1988. With a total investment exceeding US$45 million, Library Power is the largest nongovernmental funding for school library media programs in over 30 years. It operated in approximately 700 schools and served more than one million students. Library Power sought to create a national vision of public elementary and middle school library media programs through the instructional leadership of the library media specialist, and through partnerships within the district and with the community. An evaluation of the Library Power Program found that the Library Power initiative advanced the notion of a student-centered library media program in a learning community. It showed that given the right conditions, school library media programs can promote positive opportunities for excellence in teaching and learning.

Introduction

Library Power is a nationally funded initiative in the United States designed to promote the full integration of the school library media program into the school curriculum in public elementary and junior high/middle schools. The primary goal of Library Power is the promotion of school excellence in teaching and learning through the school library media program. This ambitious initiative was funded by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. The Fund's mission as listed in its annual reports is "to foster fundamental improvement in the quality of educational and career development opportunities for all school-age youth, and to increase access to these improved services for young people." The US$50 million initiative is the largest privately funded initiative for school library media programs in more than thirty years. This study summarizes selected findings of the national evaluation of

IR057591

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Library Power, along with a brief discussion of implications for pre-service and continuing education of teachers, principals, and library media specialists. It also discusses the likelihood of institutionalization of Library Power practices.

Library Power created goals that were an outgrowth of the vision and professional practices recommended in the United States national guidelines *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*, published in 1988 by the American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology. These goals supported the program's emphasis on teaching and learning and the involvement of many in student learning:

- To create a national vision and new expectations for public elementary and middle school library programs and to encourage new and innovative uses of the library's physical and human resources;
- To create model library programs that are an integral part of the educational process;
- To strengthen and create awareness of the role of the librarian as a teacher and information specialist who assists teachers and students;
- To encourage collaboration among teachers, administrators and librarians that results in significant improvement in the teaching and learning process;
- To demonstrate the significant contributions that library programs can make to school reform and restructuring efforts;
- To encourage the creation of partnerships among leaders in school districts, public libraries, community agencies, business communities, academic institutions and parent groups to improve and support school library programs.

Library Power Background

Library Power began in 1988 as a program to revitalize school library media centers in New York City where the Fund was located. The program soon became a national effort. Using a competitive grant process, nineteen communities in the United States were selected as Library Power communities. Each community received US$1.2 million over the three-year period of its grant. Funding for the initiative from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund was provided to community agencies known as local education funds (LEFs). These tax exempt, non-profit, community-based organizations work to build community support for high-quality public K-12 education. A Library Power Director, hired by the LEF, worked directly with the school district(s) in the community and others, including the district's library media supervisor, to improve student learning through school library media programs.

Most, but not all, of the Library Power communities represented urban environments. The level of library service being provided at the time Library Power grant funds were received ranged from communities with almost no elementary school library media specialists and no school libraries all the way to communities with school library media centers, full-time library media specialists, and district-level library media supervisors. All communities had needs for improving their school library 's role in promoting student learning. Most Library Power communities were single district communities, but three of the Library Power sites were multi-district sites involving several districts in proximity to each other.

Schools in communities that participated in Library Power were required to have:

- a full-time library media specialist
- opportunities to improve library media collections with matching money from Library Power
- flexible scheduling (student access to the library media center as needed)
- professional development programs for librarians, faculty, and administrators.
- opportunities to improve library facilities to accommodate multiple uses and to be more inviting to its users
- a team at the building level that focused on planning and implementing Library Power goals.

Research Questions and Methodology

An investment of almost US$50 million to promote the central, instructional role of school library programs needed to be evaluated. The central questions of the evaluation were: What are the contributions of the Library Power Program?, and What can be learned from the Library Power Program for the future? The DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund sought answers to these questions through a contract with the University of Wisconsin - Madison, School of Library and Information Studies. Following four months of planning, the evaluation of Library Power began in the fall of 1994 with data collection continuing through June 1997. During these years, more than fifty researchers, including school library media program experts, administrators, and other educators comprised the interdisciplinary evaluation effort. This interdisciplinary focus was important because the Library Power program itself involved professionals in a variety of educational roles: library media specialists, classroom teachers, building principals, and district leaders. The use of researchers with a range of perspectives provided an ability to observe and respond to the multiple roles performed in Library Power schools.

In the methodology, standardized observations across the national initiative were sought as well as specific observations that would capture the uniqueness and richness of local experiences. A major emphasis was a mixture of survey and case study approaches.

Surveys were designed for library media specialists, principals, and teachers in Library Power schools. Library media specialists responded to three years of surveys containing a number of constant questions, as well as questions as that were refined as the evaluation progressed. These surveys focused on staffing, collection quality, facilities improvements, collaboration activities, and expectations for continuity beyond the project. In addition, library media specialists were asked to work with their teachers to create and send to the evaluators collection maps that described the current strengths of their collections, and that proposed directions for collection growth that closely aligned the collection to the school's curriculum. Library media specialists also maintained records (called logs) of each collaboration activity carried out with teachers, and sent the evaluators their top five collaboration logs along with a summary of all collaborations in the school year.

All principals in Library Power schools and all teachers from sampled schools were surveyed in 1996 and 1997. Principals were asked about their observations of how the library was being used. Teachers offered their perspectives on how the initiative was working for them.

On these surveys to library media specialists, principals, and teachers, a number of common questions were asked of all three groups, so that the project could be viewed from these different perspectives. In 1997 survey responses were received from 446 library media specialists, 417 principals, and 1,185 teachers, exceeding 75% response rates on all three surveys.

To augment the data obtained from surveys and to get a sense of how Library Power worked in a local context, multi-case sets of case studies were conducted in eight of the nineteen Library Power communities. In each of these eight communities, one case study focused on the project at the community level, looking at the work of the local education fund, and at the functioning of the site team, which consisted of the director of the local education fund, the Library Power director, the district-level library supervisor, and a central office administrator who was usually the assistant superintendent for curriculum. The remaining case studies focused on individual Library Power schools. In all, thirty-four case studies were conducted, eight at the site level and twenty-six at the school level. The general pattern was for case study researchers to make two visits per year, one visit in the fall and another in the spring.

Findings

Based on multiple data sources, including the instruments described above, as well as multiple perspectives that included teachers, library media specialists, and principals, a great deal was learned about the Library Power program. The findings will be summarized below, focusing especially on school library media collections, access, and collaborations.

In terms of collections, Library Power schools, like most school library media centers in the United States, were faced with two common problems. The first problem was that of dated collections, and the second problem was the under-use of the collection for instruction. Library Power addressed both problems. First, the program provided money to match local expenditures for library material purchases. In most instances, funding for library materials in each building doubled. Second, through professional development programs and other incentives, teachers were encouraged to be directly involved in the selection of materials.

Library Power collections improved. Librarians rated 14 parts of the collection for currency and quality. Each area improved, especially picture books, fiction, and biography—those likely to be used in reading improvement or reading motivation efforts. Other collection improvements were found especially in science and technology, geography, and reference. Multicultural materials in the collection also improved. When library media specialists were first surveyed in 1995, 72% rated the collection adequate or excellent in meeting the school's needs in multicultural education. By 1997, 86% of library media specialists rated the collection at this level.

Thanks to the creation of collection maps, several meaningful opportunities for collaborative collection development were introduced. Developed by San Jose University (California, USA) library educator David Loertscher, collection maps represent a systematic approach to school library development based on the actual curriculum that is taught in the school. As a result of discussions between the library media specialist and teachers, library material purchases became directly tied to the curriculum, and teachers became directly involved in determining the collection emphases.

In Library Power schools, 85% of teachers indicated that the collection was better than before in meeting their needs. More than 70% of teachers indicated that the collection supported teacher and student needs well. Throughout the Library Power initiative, teachers became more involved in collection development and used the library collection more in instruction. Most teachers, (81%), felt that they influenced the selection of materials, and even more (89.4%) indicated increased use of the collection in instruction.

There was increased involvement of the library media specialist in unit planning, particularly through the use of the library collection. Library media specialists indicated that they were overwhelmingly (99%) involved in classroom instructional unit development through the identification and gathering of materials and resources. Similarly, more than half of all teacher respondents, 59%, indicated that library media specialists usually participated in instructional units in this way.

The collection was so important to instruction that, unprompted, 64% of teachers named the collection as the most important contribution of Library Power to their teaching. The collection was also necessary to many school-wide reading initiatives, supporting the quantity of resources necessary, offering the variety of resources needed, and providing attractive materials that students were motivated to use.

The study revealed several important themes:

- New collection development practices led to improved collections and expanded use of collections in instruction.
- Strong connections were established between library collections and instruction.
- Up-to-date collections selected by both teachers and library media specialists represented the basis for most collaborations between library media specialists and teachers. The wide availability of appropriate resources is clearly the first basis for collaboration efforts between most librarians and teachers.

The key premise of access in a Library Power school is that library facilities and resources can support instruction best if they are available at the time most suited to a lesson or when spontaneous interests arise. Therefore, flexible scheduling—the ability to use the library when needed—was a requirement to participate in Library Power.

Most Library Power schools, about 95%, had some form of flexible scheduling. About 75% of library media specialists indicated that they had a completely open schedule, while about 20% indicated that there were some regularly scheduled classes in addition to access through a flexible schedule. Case studies were especially helpful in demonstrating the variety of beliefs about flexible scheduling and showing the variety of flexible schedule patterns.

It was found that the degree to which a school library media center can fulfill the intentions of flexible scheduling is strongly related to the center's facility, its capacity, and features. Library Power funding could be used to support minor renovations to the library media center and to add attractive, comfortable furnishings to make the library media center more appealing, in concert with local support. Nearly half of the Library Power schools added more space for comfortable reading. A third added space where students could work on computers and where teachers and librarians could read aloud to groups of students. One fourth of schools added space where individual students could read, view, or listen to library

materials. They provided areas where students could work in small groups, large groups, or spaces to allow different simultaneous activities. Overall, more than three fourths of Library Power library media centers, were able to support large and small groups, reading aloud, computer use, and multiple simultaneous activities.

For many schools, there was a clear interaction between the facilities renovations and the degree to which they were implementing flexible scheduling. Libraries that provided more flexible access were more likely to have multiple use space. For example, no libraries that were regularly scheduled added space for individual reading/viewing/listening. Almost 80% of libraries with the capability of supporting multiple activities simultaneously were fully flexibly scheduled; fewer than 60% of those not having such capability were fully flexibly scheduled.

In addition, there was a strong pattern of seating capacity in the library and form of scheduling. Libraries that allowed only regularly scheduled access reported an average of 43 seats; libraries with a mix of access schedules reported an average of 50 seats; and libraries providing fully flexible access reported an average of 61 seats. Thus, it is clear that aspects of facilities and scheduling co-occur in ways unlikely to be due to chance.

A major goal of Library Power is to encourage collaboration between teachers and library media specialists. While school library media specialists have been aware of the importance of collaboration for many years, collaborations in planning instruction with teachers has not been commonplace in schools. Yet both the 1988 and the 1998 U.S. guidelines for the school library media profession demonstrate a recognition of the value of collaboration. For example, in the 1998 guidelines, *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*, the third school library media program learning and teaching principle indicates that the library media program performs and promotes collaborative planning and curriculum development. Goals in this section show that the library media specialist is expected to use the book's information literacy standards for student learning as a basis for curricular and instructional planning. The goals also include the expectation that there will be regular curriculum collaboration with teachers and other members of the learning community.

Nearly all principals indicated that Library Power was at least partly responsible for the increase in collaboration in their schools. Over half of the principals attributed the increase in collaboration directly to Library Power. Overall, over 90% of principals indicated that Library Power, working alone or with other school reforms, was responsible for increasing collaboration. Among reasons for the increase in collaboration were professional development programs for principals, teachers, and library media specialists; time for planning and collaboration; and principal accountability.

Library media specialists reported that before their schools became Library Power schools, they had regularly collaborated in planning or providing instruction with 22% of the teachers in their schools. After the schools became Library Power schools, library media specialists reported in 1997 that they regularly collaborated with over half (57%) of the teachers on the faculty.

Findings from the evaluation based on analysis of data from over 400 schools show that Library Power made a positive difference in collaborations between teachers and library media specialists. Principals overwhelmingly indicated that library media specialists

collaborated with at least some teachers to plan and design curriculum and develop the collection. For some teachers, according to principals, the collaboration between the library media specialist and the teacher occurred for the first time. In 1997, 80% of principals reported that at least some teachers at their school had begun to collaborate in planning and designing instruction with the library media specialist. A majority of principals (72% in 1997) also reported that some teachers had begun to collaborate with the library media specialist in developing the library's collection.

While the nature of the collaborations varied, most activities reported in a sample of collaborations were interdisciplinary projects. In most activities, the teacher and library media specialist coordinated a division of labor and responsibilities for instructional activities.

Of special interest was the area of information/library skills instruction. In far too many library media programs that are not integrated with instruction, information skills instruction is an event that is isolated from the school's instructional program. An examination of records kept by library media specialists about their collaborations (called collaboration logs), showed that skills were no longer being taught in isolation. Thanks to collaborations, information skills instruction was systematically being integrated into day-to-day instruction. Collaboration records showed that many information skills areas were essential to achieving the curriculum objectives established by teachers and the library media specialist.

While the results of the collaborations are promising, the evaluation also found that instituting and advancing collaborations throughout a school are difficult. Collaboration requires time in an already full schedule. In addition to the need to learn the skills involved in collaboration, support necessary to create a climate where collaboration is valued is also important.

Institutionalization

As with any effort at school improvement and reform, questions are naturally raised about the extent to which Library Power will leave a permanent mark on teachers' practices and students' learning opportunities. Such permanent impact can be construed as institutionalization—a reform or innovation that has become a regular practice, one that has become part of a school's routine. The evaluation of Library Power looked at the likelihood that Library Power practices would become institutionalized through two approaches. First, survey questions asked librarians, principals, and teachers whether eight aspects of Library Power practice would continue beyond the grant period, and whether they thought they should continue beyond the grant period. In all areas but one, well over 90% of all parties said that they expected that the Library Power practices would continue. In the one exception, all parties were uncertain that the addition of large quantities of new materials would continue. With their experience of boom and bust budgets, librarians were most skeptical: only 50% of the librarians thought that the strong support for new materials would continue. With two exceptions, over 95% of all parties thought all practices should continue; only 85% of teachers thought that flexible scheduling should continue and 90% of teachers thought that on-demand access to the library should continue. With these few exceptions, the

participants gave a strong vote of confidence in the continuity of Library Power practices beyond the funding period.

The second approach was to look at Library Power programs two years after their funding had ended to see to what degree the practices were persisting. For example, one of the more controversial practices was that of flexible scheduling, a requirement for participation in the initiative. In 1997, access to 95% of all Library Power school libraries was fully or partially flexibly scheduled. In those schools that had ended their funding in 1995, 84% were still fully or partially flexibly scheduled. This figure corresponds with the percentage of teachers who thought the practice should continue. In addition to these survey-based approaches, case study researchers were asked to make observations that would document likelihood of institutionalization.

Institutionalization of Library Power requires that its core practices become routine. A culture is established in which teachers, students and the community believe that such practices are valuable because they provide for high quality student learning. In Library Power schools, the researchers noted the accepted belief that students must learn to use modern library resources and that collaboration, flexible scheduling, and collection development are important components in promoting this kind of education. Such beliefs and structures combine to institutionalize Library Power.

Evidence from a number of study sites suggested that the core practices have been genuinely accepted for their success in providing students with a richer variety of resources. Educators and the public in the sites have come to see value in the structures and practices of Library Power and hope that they can be institutionalized. To the extent that communities, especially through their local education funds, continue to demand that schools offer the practices and resources associated with Library Power, it will become institutionalized.

Implications for Higher Education

With its interdisciplinary base, Library Power demonstrated the importance of a common vision within a school community and beyond. It demonstrated the importance of articulating the vision by many, not just the library media specialist. Library Power demonstrated the importance of collaborations in promoting excellence in teaching and learning. It also provided evidence of the important role that the library media specialist can play as a curriculum partner or leader.

Library Power suggests that it is important that the notion of a learning community be fostered, not only in K-12 environments, but in higher education, as well. It suggests the importance of collaborations between Schools of Library and Information Studies programs and Schools of Education. It suggests that future teachers, library media specialists, and administrators (as well as educators in continuing education programs) would benefit from opportunities to work together in learning communities. These would include, but not be limited to, shared courses, shared course assignments, and field experiences involving both practicing library media specialists and cooperating classroom teachers.

The realization that, given the right conditions, the leadership of school library media specialists and school library media programs can make a difference in opportunities for

student learning, is important. As a vital part of the learning community, school library media programs have much to offer in achieving the goal of excellence in teaching and learning.

References

American Association of School Librarians & Association for Educational Communications and Technology. (1998). *Information power: Building partnerships for learning*. Chicago: American Library Association.

American Association of School Librarians & Association for Educational Communications and Technology. (1988). *Information power: Guidelines for school library media programs*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Hopkins, D. M. (1999). Issues in the education of school library media specialists. <www.ala.org/congress/hopkins.html> American Library Association's Congress on Professional Education.

Hopkins, D. M. (1999). The school library collection: An essential building block to teaching and learning. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 5 (2), 1-15.

Webb, N. L., and Doll, C. A. (1999). Contributions of Library Power to collaborations between librarians and teachers. *School Libraries Worldwide,* 5 (2), 29-44.

Zweizig, L. (1999). Access and use of library resources in Library Power. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 5 (2), 16-28.

Zweizig, D.L., and Hopkins, D. M. with G. Wehlage and N. Webb. (1999). *Lessons from Library Power: Enriching teaching and learning*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE